

# Tentative steps

By Amanda Fisher

DEER Park resident Karen Gatt documented her struggle and subsequent victory against obesity in *The Clothesline Diet* launched last month.

Mrs Gatt, in her 20s and a mother of two, made the life-changing decision in 1999 to lose weight.

The title of the book refers to her first tentative steps towards weight loss in the backyard, doing laps around the clothesline.

Mrs Gatt devised her own healthy diet and exercise regime when she found that other weight-loss activities did not get results.

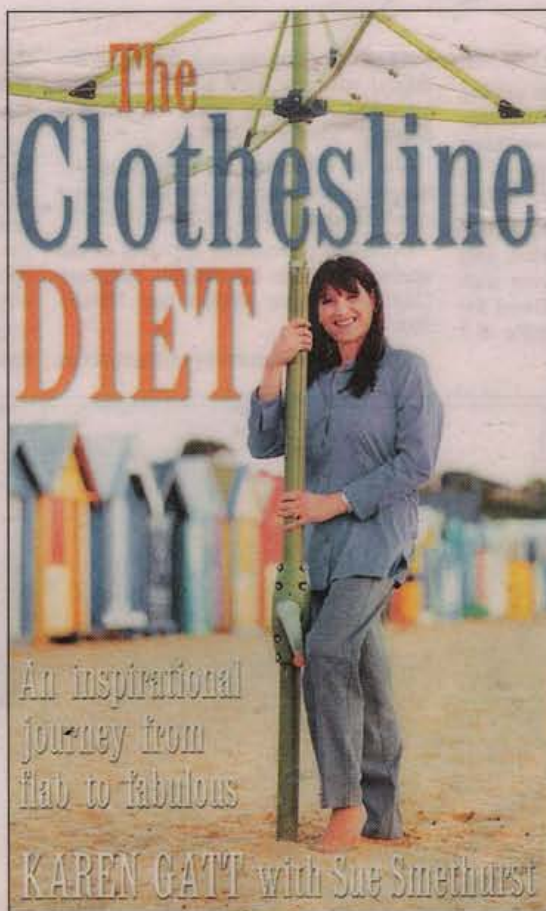
From childhood, through her teenage years and into adulthood, she struggled with obesity which peaked at 136kg, size 26.

Her weight continued to increase after she married, which put further pressure on the relationship.

In the book, she talks about a period of separation from her husband and the difficulty of having children.

She was taunted at school and in the workplace, suffered low self-esteem and reached the stage where her health was at risk from the excessive weight.

"I would look at myself (in the mirror) at the lowest



**New book:** *The Clothesline Diet* was written by Karen Gatt and Sue Smethurst.

(point in my life), I would spit," she said.

Her determination to succeed paid off.

Over a period of 13

months, she steadily lost an incredible 67kg.

This reduced her size to between 10 and 12.

When she lost the extra

weight, her skin remained stretched out of shape.

Mrs Gatt underwent cosmetic surgery to eliminate excess skin.

For three years, she has maintained her weight.

To write the book, Mrs Gatt taped her story over three months last year.

Journalist Sue Smethurst then transcribed and edited the story.

The book has had three print runs to keep up with demand.

Her story was reported in *The Advocate* in August last year when she started a St Albans support group, Gift for Life.

The group recently celebrated its first anniversary.

The group has more than 30 members, some of whom meet regularly to walk and support each other.

"They are my inspiration," Ms Gatt said.

The success of individual members has spurred her on.

"I just want to help people keep losing weight."

Her next challenge is to set up a support group in Altona.

■ Mrs Gatt can be contacted at PO Box 2009, Brimbank Central Post Office, Deer Park 3023.